

What Is Claimed Is:

1. A process for making a highly durable, hydroentangled nonwoven fabric, comprising the steps of;

- 5 a) providing a fibrous matrix comprising a blend of thermoplastic fusible fibers and base fibers,
- b) consolidating the fibrous blend into a precursor web,
- c) hydroentangling the precursor web into a nonwoven fabric using a three-dimensional image transfer device, the three-dimensional image transfer device imparting the fibrous matrix with a three-dimensional spatial arrangement,
- 10 d) elevating the temperature of the imaged nonwoven fabric such that said fusible fiber bind the fibrous blend together, thus securing the three-dimensional spatial arrangement of the fibrous matrix.

15 2. A process according to claim 1, wherein the thermoplastic fusible fiber has a melt temperature less than the melt temperature or the decomposition temperature of the base fiber.

20 3. A process according to claim 1, wherein the thermoplastic fusible fiber is selected from the group consisting of polyamide homopolymers, polyamide co-polymers, polyamide derivatized polymers and combinations thereof.

4. A process according to claim 1, wherein the thermoplastic fusible fiber is selected from the group consisting of polyesters homopolymers, polyester co-polymers, polyester derivatized polymers and combinations thereof.

25 5. A process according to claim 1 wherein the base fiber is selected from the group consisting of natural fibers, thermoplastic fibers, thermoset fibers, and the combinations thereof.

6. A process according to claim 5, wherein the thermoplastic fiber is polyester.

7. A process according to claim 5, wherein the natural fiber is rayon.

30 8. A process according to claim 1, wherein the means for elevating temperature of the imaged nonwoven fabric is by heated air.

9. A process according to claim 1, wherein the means for elevating temperature of the imaged nonwoven fabric is by heated surface contact.

10. A process for making a highly durable, hydroentangled nonwoven fabric, comprising the steps of;

- 5 a) providing a first fibrous matrix comprising a blend of thermoplastic fusible fibers and base fibers,
- b) providing a second fibrous matrix comprising a blend of thermoplastic fusible fibers and base fibers,
- c) layering one or more first fibrous matrices with one or more second fibrous matrices,
- 10 d) consolidating the layered fibrous matrices into a precursor web,
- e) hydroentangling the precursor web into a nonwoven fabric using a three-dimensional image transfer device, the three-dimensional image transfer device imparting the layered fibrous matrices into a three-dimensional spatial arrangement,
- 15 f) elevating the temperature of the imaged nonwoven fabric such that said fusible fibers bind the fibrous blend together, thus securing the three-dimensional spatial arrangement of the fibrous matrices.

11. A highly durable, hydroentangled nonwoven fabric, comprising a blend of fusible fiber and base fiber consolidated into a precursor web, the precursor web being hydroentangled on a three-dimensional image transfer device to impart the fusible fiber and base fiber with a specific spatial arrangement, the imaged nonwoven fabric then being subjected to elevated temperature to secure the three-dimensional spatial arrangement.

25 12. A fabric according to claim 11 wherein the elevated temperature treated imaged nonwoven fabric is dyed by conventional woven textile processes.

13. A fabric according to claim 12 wherein the conventional woven textile dyeing process is jet-dyeing.